

The Weekly Word
May 20-26, 2013

James gives us such a practical look at the Christian faith. I hope his words touch you deeply. Happy reading...
Grace and Peace, Bill

To hear the Bible read click this link... <http://www.biblegateway.com/resources/audio/>.

Monday, May 20: James 2– Favoritism and Faith ...

Two topics...both pierced my heart. I choose to sit under the topic of favoritism this morning.

Ouch, how often favoritism grabs me. Appearance, educations, career, profession, height, weight, accent, grammar... it is frightening how many ways I use to choose who I am drawn to and who not.

How many times have I heard within the church walls, if we can reach ‘these’ people, it will be good for finances? And the ‘these people’ are generally higher up the economic ladder and/or they look like us. It is frightening to me how easily we fall into favoritism. How easily **I** fall into favoritism!

Lord, I sit here convicted. Convicted by James’ simple yet powerful words. Oh, my how much I need a Savior! Come, Lord Jesus, heal my broken and sin-filled heart. Amen.

Tuesday, May 21: James 3– The tongue, my tongue...

Oh, how easy it is to let the wrong kind of speech slip out through my lips. A comment here, a jab there, a gossip snippet now and then... the list is endless.

My brothers, James writes, *this should not be* (10). And yet taming the tongue will be a life long endeavor!

Reading James is a ‘pop to the kisser’... mind the tongue.

Mind your tongue, Bill. Mind your tongue!

Lord, I am all too aware in these moments how much minding I need. My tongue can be sharp and biting. As James suggests, I need to look at the spring of my life (my heart) because that is where my words flow from...

Help me, Lord Jesus. Please help me to train my tongue for righteousness. Amen.

Wednesday, May 22: James 4– A good look inside...

What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? (1). Plain truth but a hard one.

Quarrels, fighting, ‘words’ with another, yes, they happen. Often, possibly always, I feel justified in my words, whether they are a defense against a perceived attack or my words initiate the conflict.

James makes a poignant observation. *Don't they* [the quarrels I have and therefore the words I use to contest my quarrels] *come from your desires that battle within you?* Ouch, the quarrels and fights I find myself in come from within me! They come from the mixed motives and imperfect desires within me!

The more I ponder this, the more validity I see and hear in it. My mixed motives and desires cause me to defend myself. What happens? Quarrels ensue. I feel slighted by someone else's action or word and I lash out. Quarrels ensue...

But I am only defending myself, I immediately think. Then again wasn't it Jesus who said, *Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also* (Matthew 5:39). I assume I am justified in defending myself, but does Jesus???

All of this drives me to look inside... at myself and my mixed motives.

All of this causes me to realize how sin-filled I am. And how short I fall of God's mark.

All of this reminds me how much I need a Savior...

Jesus, thank You for teaching me God's way. Thank You for living it and showing me an example of how God's ways look in human life. Jesus, thank You for dying for me, for forgiving my sin and for redeeming me. Thank You, Jesus.

Now that Your Word has shown me a problem in my life, help me, Lord, to correct it. Send forth Your Holy Spirit to instruct me and train me in living rightly. This I pray in Your name, Jesus. Amen.

Thursday, May 23: James 5– Five Thoughts...

James concludes with a flurry of exhortations. First thing I did was to list his exhortations, leaving out his examples or reasons. Check this out!

Verses 2-3: *Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days.*

Verse 8, 10: *You too, be patient [in the face of suffering (10)] and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near.*

Verse 12: *Above all, my brothers, do not swear--not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. Let your "Yes" be yes, and your "No," no, or you will be condemned.*

Verse 13-16, Pray in trouble, praise in joy: *Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.*

Verse 19-20 *My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins.*

Live selflessly. Wait patiently. Speak honestly. Pray regularly. Restore lovingly.

Thank you, James, for your practical word.

Lord, I cannot do any of these without Your help. Help me, I pray. Amen.

Friday, May 24: Leviticus 1– Completely given to the Lord...

We flip back to the OT today. The last pages of Exodus detailed the setting up of the tabernacle and the altar. Now in Leviticus God begins to detail the offerings that are to be made in the tabernacle and on the altar.

This morning Moses outlined the procedure for the burnt offering. What is clear is that with a burnt offering the entire animal was dedicated to the Lord, neither the offerer nor the priest received any of the animal. The whole of the animal was consumed in the fire as an offering to the Lord.

As I read about this, my thoughts dashed to Romans 12:1. *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship.* Paul uses the imagery of the burnt offering as he teaches us, as Christ followers, about giving our lives to God. The connection is unmistakable. We are to give all of ourselves as a total –holding nothing back- offering to God as a response to the mercies He has shown to us!

This thought drives me into prayer...

Lord God Almighty, I lay myself on the altar of service today. I am Yours today and always. Use my life that my life might produce a fragrant offering pleasing to You. ...

I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Saturday, May 25: Leviticus 2– The grain offering...

I sat wondering about the grain offering... a memorial portion is burned on the altar and the remainder is for the priests. As the offerer I need to release all of the grain offering. I receive no material benefit, I give it all away.

For some reason I thought about our church's food pantry. It is not very large, but each week members of the church, with needs, receive bags of groceries. We have a handful of families who receive food pantry bags each week. All of this takes place quietly to preserve the dignity of all involved.

The thought occurred to me that donating to the food pantry is a little like giving 'grain offerings.' I release my offering to the Lord. God is blessed by my giving and then, in the case of the food pantry, God uses it to help people in need.

Funny but I never thought of gifts to the food pantry as offering to the Lord. I have to chew on this some more.

Lord, helping people in need is near and dear to Your heart. Help me to engage in that activity whether through giving to the food pantry or other like activities more regularly and freely than I have done up till now. And may I do this quietly and for Your honor and glory. Amen

Sunday, May 26, 2013, Sunday Worship

If any of my thoughts or the Bible readings spark questions send an email reply and I will do my best to answer all questions from people on the list... I will answer personal questions privately; general questions will be answered in a subsequent email installment.

If you are reading along with me from the PCOG website you can send questions or request being placed on the weekly email list by emailing Lisa at office@pcogonline.org.

Click here for a link to my sermons on the web. Sermons are generally posted within 2 days.